

LEAGUE FOR COASTAL PROTECTION

Office of Susan Jordan

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The Honorable
Anthony Beilenson

Melvin B. Lane

May 31, 2001

Donna Wieting, Chief
Marine Mammal Conservation Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226
FAX: 301/713-4060

**RE: 66 FR 15375, Taking marine mammals incidental to
Navy operations of Surveillance Towed Array Sensor
System (SURTASS) Low Frequency Active (LFA) Sonar**

Dear Ms. Wieting:

As the citizen observer to the LFA Technical Advisory Group, I would like to express my strong opposition to the proposed rule to regulate the small take of marine mammals during operations of SURTASS LFA Sonar.

The rule, as proposed, violates the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). And, it is my belief that SURTASS LFA Sonar is likely to have a significant impact on marine mammal species and stocks if it is deployed as currently described.

My primary concerns center on the following objections:

- the proposed monitoring is inadequate to verify takes beyond the 180 dB sound field.
- there is no scientific basis for the 180 dB standard as the upper limit of acoustic harassment and non-serious injury from low-frequency sound for all marine mammals.
- the research that undergirds the assumptions in the FEIS was narrow in scope, focused on short term impacts, and as a result, is unable to predict long term impacts with any reliability whatsoever.

- there is little discussion of the importance and potential for resonance effects despite the growing evidence that resonance effects may be the more important than auditory effects in assessing impacts to marine mammals.
- there is no accounting for cumulative impacts of the multiple sonars that are likely, if not certain, to be operating in conjunction with the Navy's LFA Active Sonar.

Finally, I implore NMFS to reconsider the grave step the agency proposes to take with this rule. This 'redefinition' of the 180 dB standard will forever alter the manner in which impacts and takes are assessed and it is done without sufficient scientific information.

Further, this redefinition not only changes the standard here in the United States, it 'lowers the bar' worldwide. This, in and of itself, is an act of extreme irresponsibility.

In closing, I request that NMFS withdraw this proposed rule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Susan Jordan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Susan Jordan

LFA Technical Advisory Group, Citizen Observer
League for Coastal Protection, Board Member